

# From Cameralism to nineteenth-century socialism: Lorenz Stein's idea of a science of society

Dr Diana Siclovan  
University of Cambridge

## The author:

Diana completed her PhD at King's College, Cambridge in 2014 with a thesis on Lorenz Stein's political thought. Prior to that, she also obtained a BA in History and an MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History from Cambridge. Her research interests are in nineteenth-century intellectual history, as well as the wider history of socialism and political radicalism. During her graduate studies she developed a particular interest in the intellectual significance of the 1848 revolutions and was involved with the Centre for History and Economics research group '1848 as a Turning Point in the History of Political Thought', which will produce an edited volume to be published by Cambridge University Press in 2016. Diana is currently a research assistant at the German Historical Institute in London, and is also working on a translation of a work of contemporary German philosophy for Polity Press.

## The paper:

This paper introduces and discusses the nineteenth-century legal scholar and social theorist Lorenz Stein's idea of a 'science of society'. Rooted in the German academic tradition of *Staatswissenschaft* (state science) and the wider legacy of Cameralist politics, Stein envisaged the science of society as a uniquely German, state-led solution to social tensions and inequality. Rejecting both revolutions and democratic constitutional change, Stein proposed a gradual implementation of measures for social mobility and equality through the state's administrative structures. First articulated in the early 1840s (in a landmark work that inspired the first serious debate about the potential of socialism in the German Confederation), Stein's ideas further developed in reaction to the 1848 revolutions, an experience that led to widespread disillusionment with democracy and popular sovereignty. In the 1860s, Stein's thinking came together in the seven-volume work *Verwaltungslehre* (Administrative Science) that described a comprehensive social and political system, imbued throughout with a 'social spirit'. Despite being marginalised since the late nineteenth century, and branded as reactionary by Marxist historians of socialist thought, Stein's vision was in fact widely influential during his lifetime. It invites a rethinking of the meaning of what a 'socialist state' might look like, and highlights the broader significance of a non-republican tradition to modern European politics.